In Praise of Shadows

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In Praise of Shadows

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Summary

Inspired by the same plot and characterizations as Linpatootie's amazing piece. Sleepwalking Will ends up at Hannibal's house one night.

This is my first fanfic piece--I would appreciate any comments about where I fall off the tracks in terms of having the character word something/think something in a way that he wouldn't!

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

- Inspired by The Way A Knife Loves A Heart by Linpatootie

Chapter 1

All truly beautiful things emerge in the night. He is therefore both surprised and not surprised when he senses Will at his doorstep at 2am, a half-awake gift wrapped for him in shorts and a thin t-shirt. Will's eyes are fogged, seeing and interacting with something invisible to Hannibal.

Will has been staying at a motel a few miles away due to a case he's working on. He is wearing shoes, thankfully, but there is dirt in the creases of his nails and near his hairline. He smells like earth and dust and sweat and that edge that is unique to him. Hannibal ponders how much Will's condition has worsened over the last few days, imagining a sleepwalking Will methodically lacing up his shoes.

"Will?" he asks softly, not wanting to bewilder him. There is no response.

He directs him inside, guiding him by the shoulder, to the living room and onto the couch. Hannibal kneels in front of Will, looking up at his face, half-illumined by the yellow light of the lamp. Will's eyes aren't vacant, but they aren't focused either. He is somewhere in between.

Hannibal appraises him. This is the most of Will's skin he has ever seen. It delights him, although not necessarily sexually. Sex is a means, a way to control rather than to worship and commune. Hannibal allows himself to study Will's bare knees– bony, pale, so easily breakable. How foolish that this man walked here barely dressed in the cold, exposing his knees to a monster.

When he looks up, Will is staring at him. Briefly, Hannibal's pulse stutters, and he has the absurd notion that Will can read his mind.

"Will, do you know where you are?" He says it kindly, professionally, his voice all ease and control, not the least bit perturbed.

Will's gaze is piercing in this moment, alit with something that isn't fully human or fire. A memory comes unbidden to Hannibal's mind, one that he hasn't carefully placed in his memory palace. It is of a hawk from his childhood, a performance he had forgotten. Early morning, the sky like an underdeveloped picture, and the hawk was ripping a rabbit apart, fur and bone and sinew. Hannibal had watched, intrigued by the bird's relentless, myopic feeding, its murderous eyes.

For a second he pictures Will as the rabbit, dazed and disemboweled, his spirit embarked toward a far nothing. Hannibal feels an odd pang, envisioning this nothingness where he would not be able to reach Will.

"I will get you a glass of water," Hannibal states, swallowing. He has to help Will before he can hurt him.

"Something smells terrible," Will says seemingly to himself. "… Awful."

Hannibal blinks. No unwanted scent takes up residence in his home: everything in this house is something Hannibal has chosen, placed, wants. And Hannibal, rest assured, can smell *every little thing in here*.

The outlandish, rude statement from a guest would usually end in punishment and a divine meal. But for some reason it does not tarnish his view of Will; it is simply part of his ever-deepening, ever-creasing and folding picture. Perhaps Will, outside of his scheduled sessions, doesn't even fit into the category of guest anymore. He wonders if the term "friend" would fit, but he needs to try it out on his tongue first before he presents it to Will. For now, he assumes a mask of concern, one he wears often and expertly in his office.

"Might I suggest that it is you, Will? You are the one who arrived at my home in the dead of night."

Will appears to take this in, considers it. He smells around his armpits. "I think I'm dreaming smells" he says finally, sounding bone-tired, resigned. "I don't know what is real."

Hannibal is delighted, because his plan is to make everything disappear for Will except himself. "Let me take you to my guest bedroom. It is perfectly made up. Dusted. No bad smells will find you there." The last sentence is completely unfounded, purposeless. Any smell in Will's head will follow him up to the bedroom. Smells caused in part by the disease that Hannibal is allowing to bloom unchecked within his brain. Hannibal dares another look at Will's knees, so pale and vulnerable– a flash, the briefest fantasy of cracking the joints, of making something beautiful with them.

Will opens his mouth but nothing comes out. He is still shivering. Hannibal feels himself swallowing in response. He makes a note to consider why his swallowing has become so much more pronounced when Will is around. It is almost... involuntary. And Hannibal is not one who aligns himself with the involuntary. His eyes return to Will's lips, wanting to touch them with his fingertips; it fills him with an operatic symphony to imagine that the words Will fights to say or hold back are about him, about the darkness kneeling in front of Will. Show me to myself, Hannibal thinks. Show *us*. I will look at us. *I will see you.* Hannibal burns with excitement at this seeing. He wishes he could take a photograph of Will in this moment, frame it and hang it in his bedroom.

Henri Cartier-Bresson referred to the act of taking a good picture as the "decisive moment." These moments are only possible, of course, because of death and man's ability to perceive, to appreciate the becomings that rise and fall all around them, all the time. And yet so few people see them.

Will, one day, will die. Frankly, Hannibal is *always considering Will's death. A person's life cannot be contextualized or seen clearly if his death is not there too, a constant shadow. Will's death, if fate allows, will be at Hannibal's hands.*

The idea comes that perhaps it will be the inverse: Hannibal's end will come at the literal hands of Will. He finds he doesn't mind the thought too much.

He gently guides Will up the stairs to the third guest bedroom, the one closest to Hannibal's own. This way Hannibal can smell him, can glide easily on socked feet to watch him or hear

him stir. He puts the comforter down, rubs his hand over the top sheet just to feel its rich silkiness. He sits Will on the bed, and pushes him a bit so that he will lie down. Leaning over Will, ostensibly getting the sheets just right, Hannibal can smell whiskey and suffocation on his breath, hot and sick like a child's. How did Will's father take care of him as a boy, Hannibal finds himself thinking. Odd thoughts have been occurring to him since he met Will. Odd fishes fleeting through the water, glimpses and shadows and silver. Perhaps Hannibal has had these curiosities about other people in order to construct their thinking. But he senses something different about this, about the parts of his brain and body that animate when Will is around.

"I will get a glass of water for you."How many times is he going to tell Will he is going to get a glass of water? He wants to roll his eyes at himself--but he would never make such a bald, simplistic gesture-- so instead he places his hand on Will's forehead. As expected it is burning up, the perfect temperature.

Would Will let Hannibal bisect him, watching with a detached curiosity for as long as he could remain conscious?

"It's you," Will says, his eyes closed, his face almost serene despite the fire raging within him, his dark hair fanned out on the pillow. Hannibal has a strong urge to run his fingers through that hair, to sniff the most untouched parts of his scalp.

"Yes, Will, it is me. It's Hannibal. Dr. Lecter." His first name sounds funny on his tongue. He realizes he rarely says it. Has Will ever said his first name? Surely not. He would have noticed; it would have been an absolute pinprick of delight.

"No, I know.” Will lets out a short derisive laugh. "I'm not that far gone.” He swallows, keeps his eyes closed. “The smell." He pauses again and opens his eyes, looking at the ceiling. "It's you."

The air in the room turns glacial. Hannibal is almost– nearly– at a loss for words. The moment stretches; Will continues to stare at the ceiling. Does Will know what he is? Does he know he has shackled himself to something not human and light and good? (Good, of course, is the most absurd concept to exist.) He remembers Will’s open face, in awe of him as he watched Hannibal in the back of the ambulance. Hannibal almost chuckles to himself. All he did was put slight pressure on the guy’s kidney; it was nothing near surgical prowess.

"Oh? What do I smell like to you, Will?"

"You told Jack that I have pure empathy. Did you think you were invisible to me?"

"Of course not." He stops himself from saying more. But he wants to be daring. Yes, yes he does. He wants to keep prodding, poking this otherworldly lucidity in Will, sliding his hands in the rotting honeycomb of Will's mind. Hannibal is *so* bored. He can’t just let moments like this go, these moments that are so intricately, beautifully tied to mortality, to their deaths.

But he is patient. He will wait. Forever if he has to.

Will coughs, and the cough is so delicate that it punctures the tightness in the room. Will is still underneath Hannibal, solving, straining, trying intently to figure things out when most of the rooms of his mind are burning, collapsing around him. Will closes his eyes and Hannibal is able to fortify himself and his personhood for a few more moments at least. Briefly he feels the stretch of the suit. He registers that Will is not as there as he seems; Will's current state is a mad lucency; all of this will slide off his brain like water and be forgotten when he wakes.

Hannibal doesn't need to put on the physical suit, but it has become muscle memory, no breath of space between thought and action, between decision and assumption. One day, hopefully quite soon, Hannibal will be able to crumple the mask and lick Will's blood and insides. His project-- art, beauty, torture, darkness. Above all, his desire *to help*, to cultivate this man in front of him. Will will finally be himself. Hannibal must be the machinery that pushes Will into the corner he has always fought against.

Hannibal decides to play a game. If Will calls him a murderer, he will cut out Will's tongue and make an excellent Moroccan dish out of it. If he says something else, he will only bite Will's feet once he has fallen asleep. (He laughs to himself– when has he become a man who bites feet?)

"It isn't awful," Will says. He laughs. "No, I was wrong about that. This isn't.... pestilential. Or transmittable." He is spitting the words, just like when he talks about a murderer's motives, correcting the agents around him who have such poor guesses. "It's *thirsty*. It *wants* so badly." He is dissecting the case of Hannibal.

Hearing this, Hannibal frowns. He notices that his pulse is also elevating, though far shy of erratic. *Is he a mass of want? The frown deepens.*

It is late, and Hannibal has several clients, an early morning one that will be especially trying. His face becomes placid-- he's had his fun— and tucks a strand of Will's hair behind his ear. One last touch. "I'll bring you some water. Then you must sleep."

A thought comes to him as he pads down the stairs to the kitchen, something in the realm of Buddhist aesthetics-- every moment described as impermanent, a scattering of flowers. And eternity is the same-- a scattering of flowers. This moment and eternity, siblings. Art as worshipping this moment. Religion as worshipping eternity.

Will, yes-- Hannibal's scattering of flowers.

He fills up a glass of filtered water, finally making good on his promise. He sets it down while he retrieves some Aspirin from the bathroom. When he returns he notices with pride that there isn't a single smudge of fingerprint on the glass. Spotless. He returns to Will, who is sound asleep. He takes a rag and gently wipes off the dirt on Will's forehead. He considers humming something in Will's ear, cleansing and balming him with music. He considers eating Will's dirt off the rag-- and he does lick the rag, surprising himself. "Goodnight, Will," he whispers, and closes the door.

Yes, it is enough for one night.

Hannibal sleeps lightly, then awakens to a hazy winter sky, like eyes blurred from sleep. He isn't sure when Will will wake, so he holds off making the tea, but he puts out two of his favorite bone-white cups. In old Uzbekistan, the elites drank from meticulously crafted teacups that played various notes when struck. And when Genghis Khan invaded the area, he mercilessly shattered every single teacup, along with the unique, almost otherworldly design of the teacup.

Hannibal whips the eggs for a french omelet gracefully, allowing just the right amount of air to enter into the mixture. He likes this plan. To elicit from Will every kind of moan and cry, like a spoon striking different parts of a teacup. A ceaseless cry, a soundless one. A biting one, a bitten one. He'll destroy anything that tries to interrupt or "save" Will. *Oh*, these people who want to save him and don't even know him.

Hannibal will destroy all of Will's past, his future– or all that doesn't serve him, him being Hannibal. Will will live only in Hannibal's eternal, unbreathing, soundless present.

Is this domesticity? he wonders as he pours fresh squeezed orange juice.

He hears Will's feet on the stairs. He arrives, curly hair an alive mess, his boyish face soft. Hannibal wants to run toward him and bite his cheek off. But he clears his throat and offers what he believes to be a pleasant, reassuring smile. A smile a therapist gives his patient, or a friend gives his companion.

He is a source of stability, after all.

"Good morning, Will. Were you able to find any rest?"

Will looks around as if everything has an air of unreality. Hannibal often feels like this too, more than he cares to admit lately.

"You own a lot of art," Will says, peering around, ignoring the question. His shoulders are hunched; Hannibal senses that he feels awkward about the night's events.

Hannibal wonders what Will is thinking about this domestic space, everything touched and chosen by Hannibal. Will he see it?

"Well, there are many ways to define art. But yes, I do. I find that art reaches something real but beyond. The only transcendence available to us."

Will smirks, his eyes lingering on the X painting. "Art has always seemed dangerous to me," he says, sounding clenched. Like he's spitting, like he's once again in a fight with himself, with everything and everyone populating the world.

"You fear it could mislead you," Hannibal states as he sets their plates at the breakfast table. Protein scramble. Made with a dentist's liver.

Will sits at the table, stares at the orange juice like it has just told him something very strange. "I never found art to be a warm companion." He grimaces. Oh, his darling boy. Will's only companions, the river and the fish and the dogs. And now *him*. How antagonistic

the world must feel to Will-- how it assaults him, rubs him the wrong way. How he rubs it the wrong way in turn. The world never seeming to give, always unyielding. If only Hannibal could have watched him from afar when he was a little boy, fishing and digging and luring.

I could spend my whole life gathering firewood in order to burn you, Hannibal thinks, an unanticipated, unfamiliar thought as he watches Will. There and then gone.

Hannibal wonders if he is losing sight of the composition.

Will leaves, refusing to let Hannibal drive him back, suggesting that he is embarrassed. Hannibal gives him shirt and pants, both a bit too big but not quite. Although thin, Will is not much smaller than Hannibal.

It is still early morning. Hannibal blinks as he sits in his empty, dark office. For a second he has forgotten about his plan to torture Will. This plan that seemed as set as a pocket watch. For a second he simply misses him. Hasn't he seen himself lying next to Will for hours, listening to his breath, forever and ever? Will, he could look into Will's earlobe and meet the entire universe. The wide universe yawning open, teeth crooked but sharp, ready to contract on them, eat them whole and together, bones and all.

Hannibal’s pupils dilate a bit in delight and expectation. He is close, closer. Will is remarkably almost *there*.

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

> This is woefully humorless. Need advice on how to capture Hannibal's humor... I know he has an odd, great, nutty sense of humor.
>
> "The Garden of Forking Paths" is a title of a Borges story (which I haven't read but need to, lol).
>
> "It has everything to do with death" comes from Helen Macdonald's memoir "H is for Hawk."

Hannibal finds himself more and more fond of how he can watch emotions develop and skitter across Will's face. It is dramatic, genuine, boyish. It is perhaps the most human thing Hannibal has ever seen.

Most people would assume that since he rids the world of men, he must hate them. But this isn't quite true.

Will is sitting across from him in Hannibal's dark office. It is evening, and the city outside makes gentle murmurs. They are conversing alone, the first time since the breakfast after the sleepwalking event when neither of them brought it up. Hannibal has poured them both glasses of wine. He wants to see what effect the alcohol will have on Will.

"Well, are we going to talk about the sleepwalking?" Will finally asks, face scrunched as he looks past Hannibal's gaze.

Hannibal remembers a moment in his early childhood. Again, another hawk, tearing up a smaller animal, maybe the first time he had ever seen a hawk kill and eat.

Something in Hannibal's young brain had worked something out. It had everything to do with death.

"Of course," Hannibal states simply. His legs are crossed, his hands clasped, receptive, open. Will's eyes are darting around, following invisible trains of thought. Taking Hannibal's words in, as he always listens and takes Hannibal in. He absorbs Hannibal in a way Hannibal has rarely experienced. Hannibal finds that this excites him. To find someone in the maze with him, someone with a beautiful, dormant darkness like his own.

"I don't know why I always end up here. At every odd hour of the day."

“In my office, my home?”

Will nods once, twice.

“I am your stability.” Hannibal’s voice is smooth. He can hear himself, as he always hears himself, from afar. Infinite performances, variations, adaptations. “It makes sense that you would come here, consciously or otherwise.” Hannibal decides not to add that it makes perfect sense because he is in fact drugging Will, rather heavily and consistently.

Will takes his words in, nods slightly. It matches with what is already in a corner of his mind.

“I’ve never had a close male friend,” Will says. And then he stands, the statement too personal for him to sit still with. He walks towards Hannibal’s desk, acts as if he is scrutinizing its contents. Hannibal finds that he *wants* Will to touch, move his things. This should worry him more than it does.

“I recall that you moved around a lot as a boy. And with your particular gifts, I imagine it would be hard to truly connect with someone. To feel seen.”

A conversation with Will from one of their first meetings-- that at night Will would look at his little house, lit up from the inside, and it would appear as if it were a boat in the sea of the land. Only then would he feel safe. Hannibal is determined to crush this house, to rebuild it in Will’s mind into the shape of Hannibal. To have Will rebuild it with him, brick by brick.

Images with no context form in his mind. A ferocious bird gathering scraps of flesh. Will's eyes wet like dew.

Will closes his eyes, rubs his face with hands ungently. “You don’t have many friends either.”

Hannibal blinks. Tilts his head ever so slightly. *Oh, how astute.* “You’ve seen my dinner parties. Are these not attended by my friends?”

“I don’t think I would consider those friends.”

“Why not?”

“It’s one of my *particular gifts*.” Will spits Hannibal’s language back out at him.

Hannibal assesses that he should redirect the conversation away from himself, toward the case Will is working on, toward Will’s warping and curdling mental space, toward his ever-wrecked (Hannibal takes pride that it is he doing the wrecking) self-awareness. But a piece of him is curious in spite of himself. He wants to lose time, like Will. He wants to submerge into something different.

“That you can see how people relate to one another?”

“I see how you’re different around people who aren’t me,” Will says softly, but emphasizing the last word, as if *me* is the most unfamiliar and intimate word for Will. “You embody the gracious host so well. Serving everyone, pouring everyone’s cup. But what is pouring into you?”

“You’re in the realm of the symbolic, Will. The nonliteral. What do I symbolize for you?”

Hannibal takes this opportunity to rise from his chair, moving toward Will who is leaning against Hannibal’s desk. The fire is gusting warmth. Hannibal risks it, stands four inches away from Will’s face. His soft white skin, his dark hair, thick curls and scruff. Will’s hands look strong as they hold on to the desk. They are capable of so much, Hannibal believes. He is very optimistic. He thinks about asking Will to draw a clock, just so he can watch those hands move deftly and surely, wildly placing numbers outside the circle's circumference, joining numbers that don't belong together.

Hannibal can’t touch him yet. He can’t scare him off. Not when he is so close. Hannibal must tread gently, in these spaces he makes of chimera and light and shadow for himself and Will. These spaces between numbers that aren't usually next to one another.

This is the realm he prefers, he knows.

“You’re a hallucination." Will still won't meet his eyes.

“A terrible hypothesis,” Hannibal says.

Will smiles. “I’ve been dreaming of blood and death more and more. Each dream feels like I am digging up another pile of dirt for a grave.”

"Your grave?"

"Mine. Yours."

"Ah." Hannibal lets the silence linger. Will swallows, visibly, and it breaks something in Hannibal, punctures or releases it, a small puff of air. *Fuck it* he remembers thinking, and then his lips are pressed against Will’s, now pressing over Will’s lips as if he were sealing an envelope.

Will goes still as an animal. A garden of forking paths. The silences between their heartbeats begin to match; Hannibal can hear the rush of blood under Will's skin. Keeping his eyes closed for Will’s benefit, he is mindful to not overdo it all; he doesn't want Will to feel flayed by his eyes.

As Hannibal presses his body into Will, he tries to make a mental note to bring up the topic of friendship with Bedelia. But the contours of his own mind feel fathomless, dark shards of glass and blood and warmth. He can't quite construct the words. Hannibal withdraws-- he may even be panicking-- and assumes a face of proper contrition in preparation.

"I..." Will starts and stops.

"I am so sorry, Will." Hannibal's words are pseudo-breathless (or is it real?). He moves his eyes downward, makes a show of straightening out his unruffled suit. "Although I am not technically your psychiatrist, this is an ethical, unconscionable breech of boundaries."

A torrent of hard-to-read emotions cross Will's face; Hannibal sees confusion, maybe betrayal. He wonders if he has miscalculated, gone too far. He wonders if this actually was

part of any calculation at all, but he can't open that door in himself so he continues to assess Will. Will looks uneasy, deeply so, a fish in dark waters.

This is all an act, a web. And Hannibal is alert, alive, watching. His eyes, he imagines, have that idle repose, that casual speculation of murder that so many have responded to with shock and horror (and they never live long enough for a follow-up response, to fully process). Can Will smell his darkness pouring out? Will is too far into himself to register Hannibal's face, or to even look at him at all. Hannibal imagines Will naked, sprawled across his fully dressed lap. Hannibal would clamp down on Will's skin until Will cried out.

Always fidgeting, now Will is immobile. Hannibal too is unmoving, ready to spring. He feels his own godlike restraint, the energy that is pulsing and wants to trap the entire world in his grasp. His face changes from placid to monster to anticipation. He is where the spiritually monstrous lies. The only element that never changes is his suit. His clothing is his constant as he transitions from man to demon within its embrace.

"Will, I apologize deeply. I will extricate myself from your life." Hannibal almost winces at himself-- has he always sounded so dramatic? He feels briefly like he is losing the plot, something he has nearly always had control of since he was a boy. He catches sight of his face in the mirror and it is the same plastic mask it always is. But if he were truthful, he would concede that something in his own eyes-- yes in his own eyes-- resembles a shadow cast on water.

Will Graham. Should he use coercion, persuasion? Punishment? A million tactics, and Will, his Will, always unpredictable. Trying hard to be invisible but failing hard. Hannibal places himself behind a chair so that he seems blocked, not threatening, also contemplative.

"Will, I want you to wade into the quiet of the stream." Will's eyes flicker, and Hannibal knows the words have reached him. "I'll get you a glass of water." Hannibal sighs to himself, wondering how his life has become a perennial retrieving of water for Will.

When I have his full devotion, it will be time to obsess over someone else. He wouldn't naturally use the word obsess, but that is what Bedelia told him last session. That he was *obsessed* with Will Graham.

Patience. Hannibal is brimming with it. The ability to watch. To hold his breath and wait for hours and hours. Outside the seasons can shift from hot to cold, shadow to sun. Man-shaped silhouettes come and go through his office, his kitchen, his dining room. The *crunch crunch* of bones breaking. *Ring ring* of a knife against a wine glass as he makes a toast. The *hiss* of the kettle, of captured meat.

He returns with water. Will is still there. Hannibal had provided the opportunity for Will to run, to free himself.

There is a deep, deep thrill in Hannibal.

Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will looks inexpressibly tired, but he doesn't shy away from Hannibal's gaze.

"Why did you kiss me?" he asks.
"I… I don't know." Hannibal uncharacteristically falters. Perhaps he is exhausted as well. "I think I have wanted to do it for a long time." Honesty. A partial or full truth, who can say. Something real glimmers somewhere.
"Oh?"
Hannibal lets Will's response hang in the air.
"Why would you keep this from me?" Will tries again.
"I am not keen on losing your company, as a psychiatrist or friend or in whatever capacity."
"And you thought a kiss would make me turn away from you."
Hannibal pretends to consider this. "Yes."

Will looks thoughtful. Hannibal manages to assert some control– via the face of indifference– by sitting at his desk and flipping through his appointment book.

"You are now looking at your calendar." Hannibal hears the notes of disbelief in Will's voice. Will comes up to the desk, facing Hannibal. Before Hannibal can make a rebuttal, Will stops him. "No. Stop acting like we're in a horribly staged play." Hannibal has to smile at that. His eyes gleam as he looks up at Will.
"I'm sure I don't know what you mean."
Will frowns. Hannibal knows he is exasperating him, and it is delicious.
"I'm sure that you do."
Will closes the appointment book. Hannibal wonders if he is going to make a grand gesture, chunk it into the fire. But Will walks around the desk to him, kneels in front of him, and places his head in Hannibal's lap. His dark curls fanned out on his thighs. Hannibal feels his own throat and heart becoming torch-like. He swallows. Hesitantly he places his hand on the side of Will's head, runs his fingers delicately through Will's hair. Will's eyes close, and Hannibal feels him release the tension in his body, tension he has been holding on for what seems like forever.

Hannibal once read something about the "conversation of death," an idea from an esteemed nature writer– that two animals of different species communicate in a flash, in a moment, deciding which is the hunter and which will be hunted. The most intimate moment that can exist.

The nature writer believed that "real hope required an awareness of both darkness and beauty at once." What did Hannibal ever hope for, other than that his machinations led him and his patients to beauty and darkness? Wasn't hope all he felt for Will, surging up in him like a great river?

Hannibal wants to keep Will here, in his lap. So he speaks.

“Paradoxes are all we have. We must have them and keep them close. Maybe you don’t want your life to be judged by how much light you produce, Will, but by how much light you displace.”

This is Will’s breaking point. He claws at Hannibal’s clothes and body, and Hannibal's eyes widen in surprise. Hannibal lets himself be dragged down onto the ground with Will. They tussle, limbs and torso and hair sliding atop one another. These moments, they are a sphere of incomprehensible loveliness, of imagination mixing with dream with darkness with unimaginable light.

Chapter End Notes

Nature writer cited is Barry Lopez. The quote about hope and darkness is from Sierra Crane Murdoch's piece in The Paris Review on Barry Lopez.

End Notes

Title is taken from Junichiro Tanizaki's essay "In Praise of Shadows."

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